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Sebastian P. Brock and George A. Kiraz

***Gorgias Concise Syriac-English, English-Syriac Dictionary***

Gorgias Handbooks.

Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2015. Pp. ix + 444. Hardback \$48. ISBN 9781463202248.

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This dictionary (Brock & Kiraz) is the first two-way Syriac-English English-Syriac dictionary for Classical Syriac. Stripped to bare essentials for convenience, it is offered as a simplified, practical tool for readers of Classical Syriac, and intended as a first recourse for translation before consulting heavier dictionaries. The volume consists of a preface, usage guide, the lexicon itself (13,000 words in each part, Syriac-English and English-Syriac), and a short appendix between the Syriac-English and English-Syriac parts. The appendix contains days of the week, months and seasons, calendrical dating of the Syriac calendar, numbers and alphabet numerals, common written abbreviations in texts, and a guide to basic greetings and etiquette in *Kthobonoyo*. The dictionary contains almost all possible words encountered in Classical Syriac literature, with just a few neologisms from Modern Literary Syriac and *Kthobonoyo*, included to a limited extent where the meaning differs significantly from the classical usage. The neologisms are demarcated by *Kth.* (for *Kthobono 'it*) to avoid confusion. The script and vocalization are in Serto, but the “header” words atop each page and titular letter delineating the start of a new letter are in Estrangelo. In the Syriac-English part of the dictionary, there is an acrostic “Easter egg” at the end of each letter’s section: a Syriac saying beginning with the letter of that section.

There are numerous reference works for Classical Syriac already, but Brock and Kiraz offer a simplified and readable key for the beginning or advanced reader of Syriac. The entries are arranged alphabetically, as in M. Sokoloff (*A Syriac Lexicon*, Winona Lake, IN/Piscataway, NJ, 2009) and J. Payne-Smith (Mrs. Margoliouth) (*A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, Oxford, 1903), rather than by root, as in L. Costaz (*Dictionnaire Syriaque-français, Syriac-English Dictionary, Qamūs suryānī-‘arabī*, Beirut, 1963), T. Audo (*Dictionnaire de la langue chaldéenne I-II* (Mosul, 1897), R. Payne-Smith (*Thesaurus Syriacus I-II* (Oxford, 1872-1901), and C. Brockelmann (*Lexicon Syriacum*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Halle, 1928). The entries for nouns are in the emphatic and singular form, with orthographically distinct or unusual plural forms listed in brackets. Entries for verbs are listed in third masculine singular. Tenses are offered in Syriac (fut., imp.) but verbal forms are given in English only. The verbal forms are abbreviated Ia (p‘al), Ip (ethp‘el), Ila (pa‘‘el), IIp (ethpa‘‘el), etc.

Sigla, grammatical abbreviations, textual examples, and other information are totally absent; as a concise dictionary, it certainly deserves its title. Entries of verbs are not very long, containing single-word glosses of each verbal form. The ease with which a reader can browse through different entries (the majority of which are a single line, such as “ܐܪܡܐܝܐ servant, slave.”) volume allows for smooth reading without the potential rabbit-holes of distraction

offered by lengthy, detailed lexical entries. The readable font size and uncluttered page layout are helpful, as well as its impressively short length (around 450 pages). A pocket edition from the same authors, containing only the Syriac-English, has since come out (Brock and Kiraz, *Pocket Syriac-English Dictionary*, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2017). The major advantage of this dictionary remains its English-Syriac section.

The English-Syriac section is more compactly arranged with three columns to a page. Verbs (marked out with a “v.”) are organized under the English present tense (e.g. “hate v.”), not future or past tense, and nouns are in singular form. One can easily use this dictionary for translating English to Syriac, or for locating potential alternative synonyms that could have been used by a Syriac author, drawing out nuances of meaning. The careful Syriac composer should be alert to the wide ranges of meaning presented in the English-Syriac part. For example, “illness” in Syriac is defined in Brock & Kiraz as ܠܡܝܬܐ, ܠܡܝܬܐ, and ܠܡܝܬܐ, with a few further terms for specific contexts. The word ܠܡܝܬܐ is usually employed in the context of disease and pestilence, and ܠܡܝܬܐ is related to wasting sickness and weakness or feebleness, while ܠܡܝܬܐ is related to demoniacal possession, convulsions, and being bruised or knocked down (ܠܡܝܬܐ).

Previously, consulting the English equivalent of a Syriac word would have been achieved normally with the limited glossaries at the end of a Syriac grammar, whereas Brock & Kiraz offer a complete 13,000-word glossary for English-Syriac composition. To test out the English-Syriac in practice, this reviewer experimented with translating a short article from the London *Metro* newspaper and a couple of lexically-undemanding soundbites of Donald Trump from English into Syriac with rather satisfying results (ܠܡܝܬܐ ܠܡܝܬܐ ܠܡܝܬܐ = “They will be met with fire and fury.”).

Every hard copy provides a code for electronic access to the online edition of the dictionary on SEDRA (Syriac Electronic Data Research Archive, <https://sedra.bethmardutho.org/>). The online edition is simple to use, programmed intelligently with sensitivity to Semitic languages. The Syriac search has numerous settings, allowing the user to search for either two or three consecutive letters (bi-gram or tri-gram), Levenshtein (an algorithmic parameter allowing words to be found through approximate accuracy, e.g. rta for rat), regular expression, and dynamic matching. The user can set the search parameters to either consonantal or vocalized, and there is an on-screen Syriac keyboard as well as transliteration input. Setting the search to display bi-gram and consonantal, for example, begins offering a drop-down of possible lexemes after two letters are inputted. The displayed entry for a word contains the meaning and basic information such as the possible forms (singular and seyame [plural]), category (such as noun), single-word English glosses (in Brock & Kiraz, Costaz, Margoliouth, and others), number of radicals, and root. Windows below this offer the full, detailed entries of Brock & Kiraz, Audo, Syriaca.org, Costaz, Margoliouth, and Nöldeke (in both German and English), among others. This feature is handy for instant comparison between these lexicons. The gloss search allows the user to search English-Syriac. A paradigm search displays full verbal paradigms in each tense, with red lettering to highlight differences. Two experimental features (under Library) are the SEDRA Syriac Library (under Syriac Resources) of electronically tagged Syriac texts, currently in its infant stages, and

dynamic tagging (under Dynamic Markup), where one can copy and paste Syriac text to see lexical information available. For those who are digitally challenged, an introductory video guide to using the online edition on SEDRA might be handy, considering the variety of search parameters and experimental resource tagging features.

One disadvantage of the periscope view of the different dictionaries in the online edition would be that presenting the dictionaries in “snippets” prevents a holistic view of the range of cognate terms and word-forms. Not all lexemes are represented by each dictionary, since they are organized differently. However, Brock and Kiraz seem to have resolved this by inserting “play” buttons, which allow the user to browse the preceding and following entries in each dictionary (this can jump to unexpected realms based on which dictionary you are browsing through). For example, one can view ܐܝܢܐ (eye) in Brock & Kiraz and Margoliouth, but the following entry is ܐܝܢܐܐ (Kth., eye-glasses), found in Brock & Kiraz only, as it is a neologism.

The simplified style and layout of this two-way dictionary, as well as its affordable price tag and accompanying online edition, make it attractive as a research and learning tool. This dictionary together with a Syriac grammar might make a good starter kit for a student of Syriac, although it would be recommended to have reliable access to a more detailed lexicon with grammatical information. For those well-versed in Syriac, its function is still greater. As Syriac still functions as a liturgical and written language (Modern Literary Syriac and *Kthobonoyo*), this dictionary also provides a gentle introduction to the contemporary Syriac ecclesiastical community, encouraging scholars to communicate and participate in Syriac Christianity. It would be a valuable addition to the arsenal of a Syriac scholar, and a convenient tool for those who want to consult the language frequently.